



**County Administrative Office**  
**Governmental & Legislative Affairs**

**Josh Candelaria**  
Governmental & Legislative  
Affairs Director

August 4, 2015

The Honorable Jimmy Gomez  
Chair, California Assembly Appropriations Committee  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 614 (Leno) –Mental Health Services: Peer and Family Support Specialist Certification  
As Amended on July 16, 2015 – **SUPPORT**

Dear Chairman Gomez:

The County of San Bernardino is pleased to support SB 614, legislation which will establish a Peer, Parent, Transition Age and Family Support Specialist Certification Program to be administered by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) and draw down federal matching funds for California.

Peer providers who use their life experience with mental illness and recovery, coupled with skills learned through formal training are valuable additions to service delivery in behavioral health settings. Research demonstrates that peer support specialists reduce hospitalizations and hospital days, improve client functioning, increase client satisfaction, reduce family concerns, alleviate depression and other symptoms, and enhance client self-advocacy.

California is embarking on its second year of the Medi-Cal coverage expansion which includes 12 million enrollees, many of whom are new to health care coverage and have mental health and/or substance use disorder challenges. Although the Department of Health Care Services anticipates that there will be substantial growth in the demand for peer support specialists, there are no statewide training standards, supervision standards, or Medi-Cal Program certification currently in place. In contrast, the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs and more than 30 states have already established peer certification programs.

The Administration included peer support in their Section 1115 – Medi-Cal 2020 – Waiver Renewal Concept Paper to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. In the concept paper, DHCS noted that the expanded use of peer providers in mental health and substance use disorder services can further improve care coordination between behavioral health needs and physical health care needs of patients, which leads to a reduction in high-cost care resulting from poor management of chronic conditions, hospitalizations and emergency department visits.

SB 614 will enable California to obtain a 50% federal match for services and afford California the ability to reinvest local funds into mental health.

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For these reasons, the County of San Bernardino respectfully requests an “Aye” vote on SB 614. If you have any questions, please contact Josh Candelaria, Director of Governmental and Legislative Affairs at (909) 387-4821 or [jcandelaria@sbcounty.gov](mailto:jcandelaria@sbcounty.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Ramos', with a stylized flourish at the end.

JAMES RAMOS  
Board of Supervisors Chairman  
Third District Supervisor  
County of San Bernardino

c: Honorable Members and Consultants, Assembly Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Mark Leno, California State Senator  
San Bernardino County Legislative Delegation